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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Second phase of United Nations Operation in Somalia" one of largest to be undertaken by United Nations", according to Secretary-General's Special Representative in that country.

+ Co-Chairmen of Yugoslav Conference hold talks with European Community Ambassadors at Headquarters; need to move quicker towards establishment of war crimes tribunal discussed.

+ Security Council decides to hold election on 10 May to fill vacancy in International Court of Justice; post falls vacant following death of Judge Manfred Lachs last month.

+ Arrangements announced by Israel and United States concerning Palestinian deportees in southern Lebanon are focus of separate meetings held by Secretary-General with Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish organizations and Permanent Observer of Palestine.

+ Cedric Thornberry, Deputy Chief of UNPROFOR Mission says situation in Sector South and Pink Zones remains tense; says UNPROFOR's freedom of movement is restricted.

+ Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) says "Croatia's brutal aggression" against areas under UNPROFOR protection is continuing despite Security Council's condemnations.

+ In Cambodia, cease-fire violations are continuing in Siem Reap and Kompong Thom provinces, according to UNTAC press release.

+ Special Commission set up under Security Council resolution 687 (1991) to monitor disposal of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction establishes small presence at missile research and development centre near Baghdad; in separate development, review of United Nations Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme in Iraq shows that essential food supply needs are being met.

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For information media--not an official record

+ World Food Programme to provide emergency food aid to refugees from Tajikistan who have fled civil unrest and are seeking safe haven in Afghanistan.

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The next phase of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), which would include a military and supporting civilian wing, would be one of the largest operations to be undertaken by the United Nations, according to Ismat Kittani, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for that country.

At a press conference at UNOSOM Headquarters in Mogadishu yesterday, Mr. Kittani said that UNOSOM II would be given an enforcement mandate rather than the traditional peace-keeping role. The aim of the Unified Task Force had been to establish a secure environment in Somalia for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. It was now up to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kittani said, to propose to the Security Council a plan for enhancing that secure environment so that there would be no recurrence of the chaotic conditions.

He emphasized that there was "perfect cooperation" between officials of the United States and the United Nations in the consultations on the transition. The Somalis had signed an agreement on cease-fire monitoring and disarmament which was being discussed to see how it could be put into practice.

A conference on Somalia has been scheduled for 9 March in Addis Ababa to consider a proposed 1993 rehabilitation plan, which will be followed by the Conference on National Reconciliation in Somalia, scheduled to begin on 15 March also in Addis Ababa.

A report by the Secretary-General on the second phase of UNOSOM is expected next week.

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Lord Owen, Co-Chairman of the International Conference on former Yugoslavia, met with Ambassadors of the European Community at Headquarters today for a discussion of the need to move quicker towards the establishment of an international criminal tribunal in connection with the war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Spokesman for the Co-Chairmen of the Yugoslav Conference, Fred Eckhard, told correspondents that Mr. Owen had also briefed the Ambassadors about the status of the peace talks, which are scheduled to begin in New York tomorrow. Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance have received reassurances from the European Ambassadors concerning the 'Vance-Owen' plan, he said.

Mr. Eckhard said the Co-Chairmen had also met Yuliy Vorontsov, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, and were later scheduled to meet Mate Boban, the Bosnian Croat leader, and Mile Akmadzic, the Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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The Security Council, at a meeting this morning, decided that election to fill a vacancy for the remainder of the term in the International Court of Justice, following the death of Judge Manfred Lachs, will be held on 10 May 1993. The election would take place at a simultaneous meeting of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali would notify Member States about the election before 10 February, so that they would have three months to announce their nominations.

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The arrangements recently announced by the Governments of Israel and the United States concerning the 400 Palestinians in southern Lebanon, who were expelled by the Israeli authorities last month, were the focus of separate meetings held earlier this week by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali with representatives of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations and the Permanent Observer of Palestine

According to his Spokesman, the Secretary-General met on Tuesday, 2 February, with a delegation representing the Conference of Presidents. Mr. Boutros-Ghali told the Conference that he would welcome the arrangements "provided it was a first step towards implementation of resolution 799 (1992)", by which the Security Council demanded the immediate return of the deportees. The Secretary-General was asked by the Conference to urge the Palestinians to continue the peace negotiations with Israel.

Yesterday, the spokesman said, the Secretary-General received the Permanent Observer of Palestine, Nasser Al-Kidwa, to whom he conveyed the message from the Conference of Presidents. Mr. Al-Kidwa replied that while the Palestinians attached great importance to the peace process and looked forward to its continuation, it would not be possible for them to resume negotiations with Israel until resolution 799 was fully implemented.

Meanwhile, the decision by Israel in mid-December to expell 415 Palestinians has been the centre of the debate in the Commission on Human Rights currently meeting in Geneva.

According to a United Nations press officer in Geneva, the European Community, in a statement to the Commission, condemned the decision of the Israeli Government, saying the deportations were a serious violation of international law and would harm the Middle East peace process.

Amnesty International, in its statement, while condemning the deportations, called on the Islamic resistance movement to do all in its power to prevent attacks on Israeli civilians and arbitrary killing of alleged Palestinian collaborators.

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Cedric Thornberry, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the United Nations Protection Force in former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) told a weekly press briefing in Zagreb today that the situation in the Sector South and the Pink Zones remained very tense and that UNPROFOR was considerably hindered in its work by restrictions in its freedom of movement imposed by both sides in the most active areas. He stressed that freedom of movement was essential to carry out important aspects of UNPROFOR's work, such as gathering objective information to be transmitted to the Secretary General.

He underlined the importance of the United Nations' civil police operating in the conflict areas and deplored the fact that a number of these police stations had to be evacuated because of heavy shellings.

Stressing that the situation in former Yugoslavia would probably escalate if UNPROFOR troops withdrew, Mr. Thornberry said there was an urgent need for a peace-making process parallel to the peace-keeping work of UNPROFOR.

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The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) has expressed regret over the continuing "brutal aggression" by Croatia against the areas under the protection of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) despite condemnations made by the Security Council.

In a letter to the Council President, dated 1 February, the Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Ilija Djukic, said he feared that Croatia was preparing a fresh attack on Western Slavonia (Sector West).

He wrote that in addition to infantry, artillery and armoured units, the Croatian forces had also planned to use air forces. Over the past few days, the letter said, the Croatian authorities had been evacuating the civilian population from certain areas and vacating hospitals, which indicated that preparations for a "new aggression" were under way.

Mr. Djukic noted that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as a party to the Vance Plan, had both the obligation and the right to protect the Serb population in the United Nations Protected Area (UNPA). His country had exercised maximum restraint so far in respect to Croatia's aggression in the UNPA's, which was in accordance with its efforts aimed at safeguarding peace and ensuring success of the Geneva Conference, he added.
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In Cambodia, cease-fire violations were continuing in the south-eastern Siem Reap and north-western Kompong Thom provinces, according to a press release issued today by the United Nations Transitional Authority in that country (UNTAC).

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United Nations military observers were still being denied access to investigate the front, the press release said.

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The United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), set up under a Security Council resolution, in connection with the disposal of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, established a small standing-inspector presence at the Ibn Al-Haytham missile research and development centre near Baghdad, in order to assess and monitor the research activities undertaken there. Four experts will evaluate the activities at the centre and report their findings to the Commission, on an interim basis.

Under the terms of the Council resolution 687 (1991), Iraq had agreed to renounce permanently weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometres. The Commission identified and destroyed a large number of items and facilities associated with Iraq's ballistic missile programmes.

However, according to information received from the Commission on Tuesday, Iraq has gathered at the Al-Haytham centre scientific and technical personnel formerly involved in the prohibited ballistic missile programmes. The Commission believes that the Ibn Al-Haytham facility needs to be monitored under the plan for ongoing monitoring and verification, Iraq's refusal notwithstanding.

In a separate development, a review of the United Nations Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme in Iraq, undertaken by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA), in consultation with the Government of Iraq and relevant United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, showed that essential food supply needs were being met.

According to a UNDHA press release from Geneva, the review disclosed that from 10 November 1992 to 31 January 1993, a total of 84 United Nations convoys have delivered approximately 25,000 metric tonnes of food, 7,000 metric tonnes of wheat seeds and more than 3 million litres of kerosene. The review also took note that the number of people falling within the vulnerable category has steadily increased and is likely to rise further.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) in Rome today announced that it will provide emergency food assistance for some 60,000 refugees from Tajikistan who have fled civil unrest and are seeking safe haven in Afghanistan. The food will be distributed under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The WFP -- the food aid organization of the United Nations -- will supply a total of 6,264 metric tons of wheat, rice, vegetable oil, pulses and sugar

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to the refugees. The assistance, worth $2.76 million, should cover their basic needs for six months

According to the Programme, tens of thousands of people fled south-eastern Tajikistan in early December 1992 after a new government seized power in Dushanbe and fierce fighting erupted between its forces and opposition forces. The influx of refugees increased up to some 80,000 by the first week of January.

The WFP has agreed to assist Afghanistan cope with the Tajik emergency since the country has been devastated by 14 years of continuous war and is itself dealing with a serious internal crisis, as more than 1.5 million Afghan refugees have returned home from Pakistan and Iran. The country is currently facing an acute food and fuel shortage, and there is renewed fighting around the capital, Kabul.

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